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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION
WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

Chairman: Mr. Alimamy Pallo BANGURA (Sierra Leone)

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its 1454th meeting, on 16 February 1996, on the recommendation of its Chairman, the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples established an open-ended working group with responsibility for making recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of the work of the Committee, with the same composition and mandate as the Working Group established in 1995. The open-ended Working Group did not hold any official meetings in 1995 but held informal meetings and consultations through Committee members.

2. The new Working Group has the responsibility of reviewing the work of the Special Committee and making recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of the Committee's work without compromising its mandate, in the light of recent developments, of its own experiences on the basis of work carried out during 1994 and 1995, and on the suggestions made in the Fourth Committee and at plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

3. The Committee decided, on the proposal of the Chairman, to hold consultations and commence meetings of the Working Group in March to discuss some of the issues raised at its first meeting.

I. COMPOSITION AND MANDATE OF THE WORKING GROUP

4. The Working Group was composed of all members of the Special Committee and was open to any State Member of the United Nations. Administering Powers, in particular, as well as representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories were encouraged to participate.

5. The mandate of the Working Group was to review the following issues:

(a) Revitalization of the Special Committee in conformity with the objectives set forth by the General Assembly in the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism; 1/

(b) Streamlining and consolidating of resolutions and other documents issued by the Special Committee, as well as their language;

(c) Review of the method of work of the Committee, its agenda and list of Territories;

(d) Cooperation of the administering Powers, bearing in mind the statement of the Secretary-General at the organizational meeting of the Committee on 10 February 1993 (see A/AC.109/PV.1412), and, in this connection:

(i) How best to secure their full participation in the work of the Committee;

(ii) How to restore the practice of regular visiting missions to which the Committee attaches the highest importance as a means of obtaining first-hand information on the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other Territories within the purview of the mandate of the Committee;

(iii) How to ensure that the administering Powers provide the Committee with regular, timely and up-to-date information on the Territories under their administration, in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations;

(iv) The related issue of how to obtain greater participation of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other territories within the purview of the mandate of the Committee in the work of the Committee.

II. PROGRAMME OF WORK

6. The Working Group held its first meeting on 29 March 1996 and considered the following issues: (a) integration of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance with the Special Committee; (b) the regional seminar; and (c) the schedule of plenary meetings of the Special Committee.

1. Integration of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance with the Special Committee

7. The proposal for integration, which was made by the delegation of Papua New Guinea, was discussed at length. Doubts were expressed about the merits of the integration, although the proposal was made to see whether any modification could be made in the work of the Committee, by which it could accomplish an enhancement in its effectiveness and efficiency. It was decided, however, that in the absence of the proponent of the proposal for integration, further discussion should be suspended so that the Working Group would have the benefit of hearing the representative of Papua New Guinea's ideas for integration. It was also felt that for further consideration, the delegation of Papua New Guinea should come up with a written proposal comparing the mandate and functions of the Special Committee and its subsidiary body.

2. Regional seminar

8. The Chairman informed the Working Group that the Government of Papua New Guinea had extended an invitation to the Special Committee to host the seminar at the end of May 1996. He also informed the Working Group of the request of the Secretariat to postpone the seminar to a later date in view of the current financial crisis of the United Nations. Several members disagreed with the request and were of the opinion that it was inappropriate for the Secretariat to revise the programme of activities of the Special Committee already approved by

the General Assembly, with the necessary budgetary provision to finance those activities for 1996-1997. One delegation, in supporting the Secretariat's request, suggested reviewing the cost of the seminar in New York, and away from Headquarters, in order to achieve a further economy of resources. However, the majority favouring the seminar in May 1996 ruled out its postponement.

9. The Working Group decided to recommend to the Special Committee that the Pacific seminar be held in May 1996 and that the invitation of Papua New Guinea be accepted.

3. Schedule of plenary meetings of the Special Committee

10. The Working Group discussed the schedule of meetings of the Special Committee, keeping in view the proposal of Papua New Guinea regarding integration of the Subcommittee with the Special Committee.

11. The Working Group decided that the calendar of meetings of the Subcommittee and the Special Committee for 1996 should remain as it is. Consequently, the Subcommittee could commence its work in the middle of June and the Special Committee could convene its plenary meetings in the middle of July, as approved by the General Assembly in resolution 50/39 of 6 December 1995.

12. The Working Group decided to continue its deliberations on the programme of work at its next meeting.

Notes

1/ A/46/634/Rev.1, annex.